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## THE NATIONAL TRAITS OF THE GERMANS AS SEEN IN THEIR RELIGION.

It may be doubted whether the well-known saying—As the man, so his God—can be proved to be true so far as individuals are concerned who hold their faith as the historical inheritance of a national and religious body, for only in isolated instances have such individuals the power to give to this common possession the stamp of personality.

In regard to whole nations, however, the saying is doubtlessly correct. The soul of a people, its uniformity in thought and desire, its emotions and its ideals, are reflected in its conception of deity as well as in the manner of worship. In this investigation, however, the difference between nations that have evolved a religion out of their inner consciousness and such as have received it from a foreign source must not be overlooked. In the former case alone can an undeniable connection between religion and national character be said to exist; in the latter instance the question arises how much influence is to be ascribed to the foreign source and how much is due to racial characteristics; for these characteristics cannot be effaced, and they will crop out the stronger in proportion to the youthful vigor of the nation at the time it embraces a foreign religion.

The history of Christianity is a continuous proof of this fact. Starting from Judaism, it underwent a radical change

in passing over to the Græco-Roman world; and when the Teutonic peoples as heirs of the old world received the Christian religion as part of its general culture, they in turn gave it a particular stamp according to their national peculiarities. Especially is this true of the German people, because, commingling less than others with foreign elements, it succeeded in preserving intact the national character in speech and custom, and was able to make Christianity its own in so special a way that the Christian religion as developed by the Germans received a form peculiar to that people. We can, therefore, recognize the national character in religion more readily in regard to the German nation than in regard to others.

To pursue this investigation we must take the heathen religion of our German ancestors as a starting-point. Although our information concerning this religion is scanty, still even in the little that has come down to us we can perceive certain characteristic features which later on develop more clearly in the relation of the Germans to Christianity. Our next point for consideration is this same relation during the Middle Ages. Although during this time the German character was under the formative influence of the Christian Church, yet this training was rather an outward one in ecclesiastical form and discipline than a thorough penetration of the national character by the Christian spirit. Finally, we shall see how during the Reformation of the sixteenth century and its consequences the German spirit made itself felt to such an extent in the body of Christianity that a new development in the shape of Protestantism arose.

In pursuance of this task, it will, of course, be impossible to enter into the details of history, and attention will have to be directed only towards those features of each phase of religious development in which the German national character can be recognized.

## I.

The religion of the early Germans as described by Cæsar and Tacitus and reconstructed by Grimm out of the combined

vestiges traced in speech, custom, and myth, was a crude nature-worship, similar to that which may have existed among the other Indo-Germanic peoples in earliest times. A deep love of nature and a childishly poetical imagination peopled hill and valley, forest and meadow, with half-human spirits residing in the creative powers of nature, which, in the form of giants or dwarfs, of black or white gnomes, pursued everywhere their mysterious existence, now benevolently inclined towards man, again with malicious intent, but always out-doing him by strength or magic,—the objects of his secret fear.

As with the Hindoos and Greeks, so also among the Germans there were, in addition to these inferior deities, higher gods, the ruling powers of heaven and earth, in whom the personification of the forces of nature had developed so far that, besides their significance in this respect, they served also as models and representatives of the various activities and social relations of men. At their head stood Odin, or Wodan, the god of the storm-wind and of battles; the arbiter of the fate of nations and of individuals. Among the warlike Germans, like Indra among the Hindoos of the Indus Valley, he superseded the common Indo-Germanic god of heaven, Dyaus-Tyr. Beside Wodan stood Thor, or Donnar, the thunder-god; Freyr and his consort or sister, Freia, or Frouwa, the gods of fertility of the soil and of human love and marriage. These deities were by no means ideals of morality. Wodan was guilty of deceit and treachery towards the Giants, and Freia was not a model of chastity,—the especial virtue of German women.

But, on the other hand, the German saw in his great gods the prototype of fresh, vigorous strength, and of courage in combat, the occupation and the delight of his life. The struggle of the life-giving and sustaining powers of nature against the blighting and annihilating ones was the common feature of the Indo-Germanic mythologies. Among the Hindoos and Greeks this combat of the gods concerning the existence of the world was laid in the past, while among the Germans (as with the Iranians) it was continually going on

and constituted the essence of life in the affairs of gods as well as those of men.

The impression made by nature in the north, through the sharp contrasts presented by the full life of summer and the deadly rigidity of winter, operated together with the still unsettled social conditions, with ceaseless feuds and expeditions for war or booty. The conditions both of the life of nature and of society were reflected in the religious conceptions of the Germans concerning the life of their gods, who are represented as engaged in a never-ending conflict with the threatening powers of evil (the Giants).

To sustain the gods in this struggle for the existence of the world, and to emulate them in the development of strength and of death-despising courage, seemed a pious duty to the early Germans,—the purpose and destiny of man and the means of participation in the blessed life of the gods. This happiness was not the portion of the victorious combatants alone, but of the fallen ones as well. Indeed, these more than the others were the chosen favorites of the gods. Their fate is decided in Wodan's council, and they are selected and designated during the battle by the "wish-maidens" of the father of the gods, the Valkyries. In their arms they are borne on high to the home of the gods, Valhalla, thenceforth to enjoy combat and sport and revel together with the heavenly powers.

In this faith, with all its naïve simplicity, we can scarcely fail to perceive the germs of an elevated ethical idealism. On the one hand we find a joy in living and a strong impulse to action; on the other, that delight in the sacrifice of life, which does not look upon the death of the hero as a lamentable event, but on the contrary celebrates and glorifies it as the highest consecration of life and as the means of entrance into the blessed life of the gods. We can agree with E. von Hartmann, when he speaks of a "tragico-ethical development" of the nature-religion among the Germans, even if we hesitate to ascribe to the universal national religion of the Germans the entire myth of the twilight of the gods as found in the poem *Voluspa*, of the *Sæmund Edda*.

In this myth the continuous strife of the gods with the

powers of evil is to come to a close in a final catastrophe, foreshadowed in the death of the blameless god, Balder, through the cunning of Loki. When the end of all things is at hand, all hostile powers will rise against the realm of the gods, who will succumb in a hopeless struggle against the superiority of the enemy, and thereby atone for the sinfulness into which gods as well as men had fallen. Then a new world will arise out of the universal conflagration, in which the only blameless god, Balder, will come back to life and will rule among the new race of men in perpetual spring and peace. It is probable that this picture of the future in the *Voluspá* is a late product of the northern bards, who, in view of the victorious advance of Christianity, looked upon the approaching destruction of the Germanic gods as a sad fate, which they elevated to a great world-tragedy by assigning as the reason for it the sin of the gods. To this they gave a reconciling conclusion through the hope of the return of Balder at some future time. The analogy of this point with the resurrection and return of Christ is too striking not to be considered a result of Christian influence.\*

At the same time, it may pertinently be asked whether the old German faith could have produced such a swan-song, so full of deep moral tragedy, had this ethical idea beneath the husk of nature-symbolism not been a part of it from the beginning, though in a half-unconscious way,—namely, that the good alone can survive the critical conflicts of the world, in that it is cleansed from earthly dross by the purifying flame of struggle and suffering.

Concerning the religious forms and ceremonies of the early Germans we have but little account. According to Tacitus, they did not worship their gods in temples nor by means of images, but they called gods “that mystery which they perceive only by experiencing sacred fear.” In the dim light of sacred groves, under the rustling branches of ancient oaks,

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\* This view is accepted by most of the historians of the present day. Hase (*Kirchengeschichte*, § 73) speaks of this supposition as follows: “As if Balder, released from the realm of Hela, and the returning Christ had extended their hands to one another.”

they divined and became conscious, in the emotions of the fluttering heart, of the mysterious presence of invisible divinity. Can we not recognize in this point that truly German characteristic of *mystical introspection* (*Innerlichkeit*), which scorns to fix for sensuous perception the divine something that makes its presence felt in the depths of the sensitive soul, and to drag down the sublime mystery of the unknowable to the vulgar distinctness of earthly things? The fact that the Germans attached but little importance to religious ceremonies entirely accords with this view. The Germans, says Cæsar, have neither "Druids to administer religious affairs, nor do they think much of sacrifices." The German priests, unlike the Gallic Druids, had no hierarchical privileges nor divine authority; they were simply the oldest members of the community. Besides the offering of the simple sacrifices, their duties consisted in keeping order in the national assemblies (hence their name among the Saxons, "Ehward," law guardian) and in the execution of the sentences there pronounced. They were, therefore, nothing more than the religious instruments of the community, entirely subordinate to it. Divination, although it played so important a rôle among the Germans, was by no means entirely confined to the priests. Any one could interpret the oracle by outward signs according to his ability. The inward perception, however, the really intuitive prophecy, was considered the especial gift of a few standing in closer relations to the deity; among these, the "wise women," pre-eminently. Tacitus speaks of single prophetesses, like the Bruktian woman, Veleda, who foretold the destruction of the Roman legion under Vespasian by the Batavians and who held a position in politics similar to that which the Delphic Pythia occasionally occupied. He declares, also, that according to German belief the prophetic gift is a prerogative of the female sex altogether. These wise women, who *saw* and *knew* more than ordinary mortals, could also *do* more. Together with the gift of divination, they possessed the art of magic, which rests on the knowledge of the secret power residing in words and objects. Although, in this particular, German superstition comes into close touch with the universal heathen one,

we may still perceive in it a significant peculiarity and one of the highest importance to the morality of the national life,—namely, that they assigned supernatural sight and power to the female nature pre-eminently. They recognized instinctively that there are spiritual powers in the soul of woman, far superior to the bodily strength of man; that, furthermore, her *presentiment* is more intimately connected with the mysterious causes lying at the root of affairs, than man's *knowledge* and *action*. This religious reverence for the “sanctum et providum” (Tacitus) of woman's being was the foundation of the most beautiful side of early German morality,—respect for woman, for maidenly chastity, and for the purity of family life.

## II.

The Germanic peoples who made inroads into the Roman Empire in the fourth and fifth centuries did not at first embrace Christianity in its Catholic form, but in the heretical shape of Arianism. The reason for this lay not alone in the accidental circumstance that they became acquainted with Christianity first through Arian missionaries, but also in the fact that the Arian conception of Christ as a half-divine messenger and vassal of God, in strict subordination to his master, appealed to them more strongly and was more easily understood than the complicated ecclesiastical doctrine of the trinity. Even much later, when all the connected tribes in the kingdom of the Franks had been for a long time converts to the Catholic faith through the Frankish royal power, we find the “Heliand,” Christ, described in the Saxon “Harmony of Gospels” very much after the manner of a German tribal king. He travels through the country under the direction of the highest heavenly king, his father and lord, to advise and to warn, to overcome the hostile and to die for the salvation of his chosen ones. The apostles accompany him as his retainers, and all Christians belong to his host and are pledged to his service. How naïvely these religious relations were pictured as those of a national band of followers, may be judged, *e.g.*, by the introduction to the law-book of the Salian



Franks of the time of the Merovingians. It reads, "Long live Christ, who loves the Franks! May he defend their kingdom and fill the rulers thereof with the light of his mercy! May he protect the army, support the truth! May the Lord of Lords, Christ Jesus, give us the joy of peace and happiness! For this is that people, small in number, but valiant and strong, which shook off the oppressive yoke of the Romans in battle. After accepting baptism they decorated with gold and precious jewels the bodies of the blessed martyrs which the Romans had burnt by fire or mutilated with the sword." We can see from this that the proud, warlike spirit of the early Germans had not been humbled by Christian baptism. These Christianized Germans were as far removed from the Augustinian feeling of human nothingness, wickedness, and depravity, as from the ascetic, primitive Christian sentiment of renunciation of the world and the longing for heaven.

Still, from the first, points of contact between the habit, feeling, and thought of the early Germans and the new faith were not wanting. With their active personal self-esteem the early Germans combined a religious deference to the authority of superior personages, which manifested itself in the fidelity of vassals towards their lord. To apply this natural feeling of reverence to his relation to Christ was so much easier for the German because, in spite of the supernatural grandeur of Christ, he looked upon him, first of all, as a man struggling and suffering in a human way, and sacrificing himself for the salvation of his chosen ones. Although Christ did not die in the battle-field in the thick of combat, still his end could easily be conceived of as the self-sacrificing death of a warring hero; more especially since the Church had long ago designated the demoniacal realm of the worldly prince, *i.e.*, Satan, as the real opponent of Christ, and had regarded the human enemies to whom he succumbed as instruments of Satan. A superhuman hero contending with superhuman enemies—the magical powers of hell—and at first succumbing in this struggle, though to the advantage of his chosen ones, whom he rescues from the blighting spell of magic, and afterwards, as a divine conqueror, leading them to battle and victory,—

this whole series of conceptions lay so exactly in the trend of the early German faith that the transition to the Christian belief in salvation was attended with no great difficulty. Hero-worship was a sentiment natural to them, and not less so intense admiration for death met in an heroic way. They considered such an end a voluntary and salutary sacrifice, in accordance with the decision of deity, and to be rewarded by admission to the blessed company of the gods. This was the common, essential idea running through all phases of German belief, heathen as well as Christian.

Whether this thought was hidden beneath the veil of myth, or whether the struggle between Christ and Satan, around which the Christian drama of salvation turns, appeared only as a higher form of the mythical combats of gods and heroes (Thor and the Giants, Balder and Loki, Siegfried and Hagen, etc.), under the mythical form there always lay concealed an elevated moral idealism, no other than that cardinal ethical truth, which from the beginning up to the present day forms the unchanging kernel of evangelical belief,—namely, that universal salvation is bought with the deeds and sacrifices of heroic love and faithful devotion. The German people were by nature peculiarly well adapted for grasping the ethical significance of Christianity, which brings the soul into immediate sympathy with fellow-man, humbling and elevating it at the same time. The Greek Church had made Christianity a transcendental metaphysics, into the mysteries of which the contemplative spirit might penetrate while the soul remained cold and lifeless. The Roman Church had changed Christianity into a theocracy resting upon the sacramental wonder-working power of the priests, by means of its ritual and discipline proving itself a very effectual training-school for the uncultured nations of the Middle Ages. It could, however, effect a submission to outward authority and custom only, for the *spirit* was neither penetrated nor affected by this harsh, rigid formalism.

The German, on the other hand, brought to Christianity uncorrupt vigor and purity of heart, active personal self-esteem, and strong moral sympathy,—in short, the essence

of a healthy spirit. On this soil the Christian mission of salvation could develop its inexhaustible wealth of bliss-giving seeds, and could sow, for mankind to reap, the changeless truth of its ethical idealism. Although at first there was no thought of criticising the ecclesiastical forms of dogma and hierarchy, which they had received simply as an inheritance from the superior antique culture, still they soon put into these inherited forms a deeper meaning, more expressive of inward feeling. This process, growing in strength, was in the course of time to burst the old forms asunder and to create a purer development of the Christian idea. They did not seek for Christianity in the depths of metaphysical speculation like the Greeks, nor in outward ecclesiastico-political organization like the Romans, but they perceived it in a fashion calculated to touch their emotions directly,—namely, as the victorious contest of the divinely-good principle with the godless powers of evil. In this fight the divine hero, Christ, through his sacrificing death, became the leader and bondsman of struggling mankind, which is pledged to follow him faithfully and to continue the warfare for his kingdom until victory shall reward them. A brave, warlike spirit, a ready, death-defying courage, and a steadfast fidelity in the service of the leader,—these are the characteristic qualities which the Germans brought to Christianity. By means of them they were able to grasp more deeply and to assimilate more completely than other nations the ethical significance of Christianity. Through those qualities they were finally enabled and chosen to free Christianity from the bonds of dogma and ecclesiasticism which held it during the first fifteen hundred years of its existence, and make it a part of the real moral life of mankind.

In tracing this intimate connection between Christianity and the national traits of the German, we must, however, not neglect the great contrast between the original ecclesiastical form of Christianity and the Germanic character.

The Christian religion, which came upon the scene of history as the old world lay in its death-throes, was marked from the beginning by an ascetic tendency to renunciation of the world. Already in the New Testament traces of this

inclination may be noticed, although in a milder form than in the later ecclesiastical development. The underlying idea in the gospel of Jesus and the apostles was, that the present form of the universe was about to pass away, and a new, heavenly kingdom was to arise, holding the relation to the present world of actual existence to a shadow, of spirit to flesh, of life to death, of sanctity and blessedness to sin and destruction.

It followed, as a logical consequence of the severe contrast existing between this anticipated heavenly kingdom of everlasting bliss and sanctity and our present earthly existence, that man should renounce everything binding him to the life of this world; should subdue the flesh and its lusts, "mortify the members," sell all his possessions and give to the poor, forsake and hate father and mother, wife and child, despise and yield up even his own soul for the sake of the future life, lay up riches in Heaven, not on earth, seek country and home not here below, but in Heaven, not dispute concerning mine and thine, but suffer patiently scorn and abuse. This ascetic doctrine of denial of self and renunciation of the world presents an extreme contrast to the antique, classical doctrine of vigorous self-assertion and thorough enjoyment of life, and is at the same time a reaction against it.

In order to be a means of salvation, Christianity, necessarily, had to bring out the sharp contrast existing between itself and the actual condition of the world. The severity of this contrast was not lessened by the long and painful struggles, continuing for centuries, in which it sought to overcome the stubborn resistance of the heathen world, and in which it could hope for victory only through the passive virtues of patience and renunciation and delight in suffering on the part of its followers. Thus the ascetic ideal of renunciation of self and of the world became an integral part of Christian theory and practice, attaining in monasticism its extreme logical expression and organized realization. The perfect Christian was voluntarily to resign family, wealth, and personal liberty, and already on earth was to live for Heaven alone, dead to the world. This ideal still remained, even when the Church had

been victorious over the heathen world, and when, acknowledged and favored by the state, she laid aside the *rôle* of patience and renunciation to take on that of authority and power.

Rulership over the world was now added, as a kind of supplementary pole, to the original tendency of renunciation. For as soon as the Church found its recognition by the state firmly established, and when it had created a governmental organization in the course of perfecting Episcopacy, it began to pass itself off as the threshold and representation of the kingdom of Heaven, if not as a realization of the same. The contrast of earthly existence and the heavenly kingdom now became that of World and Church. The Church now reaps the advantage of renunciation of this world in the assertion of herself,—her power and authority. Above the natural world, which is considered the scene of a useless, ungodly existence, without significance or value, rises the other world,—the supernatural one of the Church,—claiming to be the only godly and holy existence, the highest authority as well as the highest good of mankind, and to whose service all natural possessions and energies are to be devoted. In her character of theocracy the Church wishes to rule and to bend to her purposes all the nations of the earth; and inasmuch as she cannot absolutely forbid the earthly life in marriage and in the family, in work and gain, in art and science, she wishes at least to regulate these forces according to her superhuman ideals. Thus are combined the two apparently contradictory tendencies, ascetic renunciation of the world and hierarchical rulership,—the inseparable poles of mediæval Christianity.

From the first the German spirit stood in decided opposition to both these tendencies. Ascetic renunciation of the world could not but be repulsive to the German's delight in existence, monkish humiliation and bondage to his haughty self-esteem, and hierarchical restraint to his active individualism. Throughout the Middle Ages, since Boniface, the Apostle to the Germans, had attempted to bring the clergy of his dioceses under the control of Roman discipline, the Roman Church had labored untiringly at the task of making the Germans yield

to her ascetic, hierarchical ideal. Although success attended her efforts to some extent, still she was always far from the attainment of her ideal. The spirit of the Roman Church and the spirit of the German nation were not only too different from one another, but also too much at cross-purposes, for more than a mere outward compromise to exist between them. It is true, the pupil submitted to a certain degree to the authority and discipline of his Romish taskmaster, but he always retained a considerable measure of liberty for following out the genius of his nature; in fact, he occasionally indemnified himself for the enforced restraint by a reaction all the more daring.

This deep antagonism between Germanism and Romanism found political expression in the long contests between emperors and popes. The downfall of the imperial power, however, was not a triumph of Rome, but rather a victory of the egotism and "particularism" of the German princes, who took advantage of the foreign complications of royalty to substitute their supremacy for the unity of the kingdom. Furthermore, these very contests between emperor and pope, and the confusion in Germany resulting therefrom, aroused the national consciousness and the inborn desire for liberty against the Roman greed for power.

The great Stauffen emperor, Frederick II., had the entire German people at his back in his contest with Gregory IX.; more still, he acted as the skilful spokesman of all the European nations and princes, in the challenge of Rome written in 1239, in which he said, "All vileness proceeds from the oldest born of Babylon. While seeming to rule the people, they change dominion into harshness and justice into suspicion. But you, kings and princes of the earth, do not pity us alone, but pity the Church as well, for her chief is weak and her leader like a roaring lion. A faithless man sits in her midst, an unclean priest and a mad prophet. It is true we suffer most from the evil effects and suffer more keenly than others the consequences of papal wrong-doing; but, after all, our shame is yours also, and your present subjugation will appear a light one as soon as the Roman emperor is van-

quished." The same emperor wrote to Henry III. of England as follows: "It would be a labor of love to lead back the priests, especially the most powerful ones, to their position in the early Church, to an apostolic course of life, and to the humility of their Master, as well as to take from them their riches, which do them nought but harm." These words of the intellectually powerful emperor, in which the genius of the German nation of the thirteenth century found expression, echoed through the following centuries. Emperor Louis the Bavarian, who had been denied recognition by the French pope Benedict VI., declared in a manifesto addressed to all Christendom that the imperial dignity came directly from God, and that he who had been chosen by the electors needed not papal recognition. This declaration was approved by the German princes in the Electoral Convention at Rense. How much the development of this feeling, to which statesmen, scholars, and poets contributed, paved the way for the Reformation of the sixteenth century, and to what extent it brought about the success of that movement, is well known.

The German has at all times protested against the ascetic doctrine of the Church, the ideal of which is monasticism. The spiritual ideal of the monk found its direct opposite in knighthood,—a genuine product of that Germanic blood which courses through the veins of the Romance peoples also. While the ascetic ideal demands the renunciation of personal liberty, honor, and woman's love, the knightly ideal, on the contrary, is the assertion of personal honor, valor in arms, and woman's love. The hero of the Spanish romances, the noble Cid, the bold leader in the combat of the Christians against the Moors, professes the following principle: "The brave nobleman dies for any affair in which his honor is concerned, since blood alone can wash off the stain clinging to honor." In this particular the Christian knights agreed perfectly with their Saracen opponents during the Crusades. The closer resemblance of the Christian knight-templar to the Mussulman Saladin than to the Patriarch and the monk in Lessing's drama of "Nathan," is a singular fact, the truth of which is borne out by history.

By a strange irony of history, the Crusades, in which the ascetic, hierarchical spirit of mediæval Christianity found its most glorious expression, were so influential in strengthening the knightly (hence the worldly and Germanic) spirit of European nations that their emancipation from the ecclesiastical guardianship went on continuously from that time. In spite of the establishment of clerical knightly orders, in which the opposing ideals of the monk and the knight were to be united, this tendency went on unchecked. The history of clerical orders of knighthood gives satisfying proof of the undue weight of the knight as over against the monk in this union, and of the final absorption of the latter by the former.

The service of woman, which played so large a part in the life of the knights and in the songs of the bards of the Middle Ages, is also in strong opposition to the ecclesiastical doctrine, which looks upon the love of the sexes as a sinful emotion because a sensuous one. On account of this very harsh, ascetic condemnation of the love of the sexes the Church lost the direct influence which it might have had in ennobling and idealizing this passion. In spite of the fact that she raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament, the natural impulse, condemned in principle by the Church, revenged itself by disregarding all the more freely the confines of morality. The frivolous light in which marriage was regarded among the knights and Minnesingers, particularly those of the Romance countries, was the natural reaction against the asceticism of church doctrine. Among the Germans a comparatively better state of affairs existed, and in the poems of many German singers of the Middle Ages, particularly Walther von der Vogelweide, we find a spiritual love of woman characterized by a sincerity, tenderness, and purity unknown to classical as well as to Romance literature. The credit of this, however, is not to be attributed to the influence of ecclesiastical doctrine, for Walther himself distinctly protests against its artificiality in the maxim, "First, let him consider well, who says that love is sin." The contemporaneous Dr. Reinmar von Zweter voiced a sentiment of the Reformation in declaring marriage to be a divine order, more so than all orders of monks and nuns. The poet



Barthel Regenbogen expressed the hope that the Emperor Frederick, who had been the leader in the struggle for German deliverance from the yoke of Roman priesthood, would, upon his expected return, destroy the monasteries and lead the nuns to the altar. If, then, the idealism in the German lyric love-poetry of the Middle Ages does not find its origin in the Church, but, on the contrary, stands in direct opposition to it, we shall have to seek its source in the German reverence for a "holy and mysterious" something in the feminine soul. The Christian religion, in spite of its ascetic and canonical dogma, indirectly influenced and furthered to a considerable extent the development of this peculiar disposition of the Germans. This influence came partly through the general deepening of the emotional life, but especially through the worship of the holy virgin, which veiled the harsh features of mediæval Catholicism. In the picture of the virgin-mother as portrayed by the Church on the basis of the evangelical legend, are combined the ideals of maidenly purity and maternal affection. The possibility of the intimate union of these equally estimable qualities in the real world and under natural conditions of life is illustrated in the supernatural story. Although through the worship of Mary the Church wished to glorify the ideal of perpetual virginity (the renunciation of natural love), she could not prevent the sacred nimbus surrounding the head of the heavenly virgin and mother from reflecting its splendor on the countenances of the earthly ones, whose natural attraction for men was thus not lessened, but rather heightened and purified.

In contradiction to its ecclesiastical purpose, the worship of the virgin thus brought about that deepening and refinement of sexual love, by means of which it has played a far more important *rôle* in the modern life which has grown from German and Christian sources than it did in antiquity. On the other hand, however, the Church could not prevent these repudiated earthly inclinations from creeping into the sacred worship of the heavenly virgin, bringing about that sensuously transcendental fervor in the virgin-cult of which the poetry of the Catholic Church gives abundant evidence. This sup-

pressed emotion of nuptial affection took the form, in the monasteries, of a mystical enthusiasm for the virgin Mary, and, in the nunneries, of an ecstatic coquetry with the bridegroom of the soul, Jesus. Nature, instead of allowing herself to be dispossessed by the supernatural, found her way into it and became *unnatural*. It speaks well for the soundness of the German nation that it did not allow the sacred right of nature in the relation of the sexes to be blighted or desecrated by the artificiality of ecclesiastical asceticism. In the sphere of morals, the Germans had long before unconsciously overcome this Catholic dualism, the conscious triumph over which is due to an interpenetration of the religious consciousness with German mysticism.

The mediæval Church had made of the Christian religion a system of forms out of which the soul had vanished. The schools exercised their dialectical acuteness upon a set of subtle theorems, while the people could take both an active and a passive part in regard to the system of Church ceremonies and ascetic practices; but the religious nature found satisfaction neither in the one nor in the other. It was mysticism, that achievement of German feeling and spirit, which found in the sanctuary of the heart the God whom they could no longer discover in the forms of the Church.

In contradistinction to the Church, which had separated God and the world by a chasm so wide that there seemed no passage across it leading to Him, stood the doctrine preached by Master Eckart of Strasburg (1329), declaring that God imparts to all His creatures as much of His Being as they can grasp; that all are contained in Him and partake of His nature, but that in the soul of man, pre-eminently, a divine spark exists, which makes it capable of its legitimate union with God. It is self-love only which separates us from God; man must renounce it, and filled with unselfish devotion must allow God alone to work through him. He will then come to be one with God just as Christ was, for the incarnation which took place in Christ is still going on in every pious soul. A man is not considered righteous because of any works done for the sake of reward, not even if that reward be heavenly

bliss, for then he is still the slave of self-love, and, as such, condemned. That pure desire alone is good which asks nothing for itself, but thinks only of God and of what is godly. He who resigns his own will and yields himself up to God entirely, does not need to struggle for righteousness, but by reason of his love of God is sure of eternal bliss. Tauler also taught, "Our eternal blessedness is not dependent on our works, but on the strength of our love." The profound work emanating from the school of Eckart, to which Luther gave the admirable name of "German Theology," is particularly to be noticed in this connection. In it the Christian doctrine of salvation receives a deep, ethical turn which does not take Church dogma and rite into consideration at all, but looks far beyond them. "If free-will did not exist, there would be no Hell and no Devil. Nothing exists without the aid of God or contrary to Him, except that will whose purpose does not coincide with the eternal will; for Adam, Nature, Devil, signify nothing but self-assertion, self-will, turning away from God. Man cannot be delivered from this evil by anything that occurred in previous times and without his co-operation, for nothing external to the soul can make a man holy and blessed. Even though God were to take all mankind to himself and humanize himself in them, and this were not to take place in me as well, my fall and backsliding would be in no wise atoned for. It is therefore better to probe one's own heart and to know one's self thoroughly than merely to look to the example of other people. If a man free himself from the shackles of sense and allow the divine light and the divine love to shine upon him, then God becomes a part of man, and there may Christ be said to reside and *man become divine*. This result cannot be effected by knowledge and insight alone, but by that pure love to which everything godless is a source of sorrow and which spurs a man on to good deeds. Such a man has need neither of restraining law nor of meritorious works, be they his own or those of others; they could avail him nothing, for as long as a man lives in disobedience his sin cannot be atoned for nor amended, and as soon as he leaves his ways all is corrected and forgiven."

German mysticism freed man from the ecclesiastical bondage of priestly mediation and formal means of salvation, by attributing all significance to the sincerity of individual views and the unselfishness of the will. In allowing man to find and enjoy God in his own heart it removed the barrier between God and the world, and at the same time destroyed the foundation of the Catholic antithesis of the supernatural theocracy and the natural life of man, or of Church and world. Thus mysticism struck a blow at the ascetic, hierarchical view of the world characteristic of the Middle Ages, and prepared the way for freedom in religion and for the development of individualism in morals. Nevertheless, personal liberty of thought was not realized yet, because mysticism confined itself to the individual soul, and from this inner sanctuary failed to find its way into the active life of mankind. In order to become sure of his God the mystic takes refuge in the sanctuary of solitary devotion, and there, in emotion, in presentiment, in intuition, recognizes the gentle voice and soft whispering of the divine spirit; but he keeps his eyes closed to the fuller and clearer streams of divine revelation in the fulness of the world, in the course of history, in the communion of the Church. Thus his isolated mental devotion becomes obscure, confused, and dream-like, because the interpretation of his individual experience in the light of the community is wanting; this mental devotion likewise becomes weak, indolent, and inactive,—a state of mystical contemplation without effect on actual life.

Both in its strength and in its weakness mysticism reflects a characteristic feature of the German nature: on the one hand, the power of personality to make itself entirely independent of the outer world, concentrating itself upon the inner life of emotion and imagination, and finding in the depths of its own being the connection with the divine essence of life—that self-sufficiency which rests on God; on the other hand, the tendency of the individual to isolate himself from the community, to become entirely absorbed in his own existence, following his peculiar inclinations and opinions, regardless of common rules and regulations, and in doing so to become an

obscure and impractical dreamer. A *one-sided, strong individualism* has always been the strength as well as the weakness of the Germans, the foundation of their power and their achievements as well as the cause of their weakness and sufferings. Of this the history of German Protestantism gives ample proof.

### III.

At turning-points in history, when the universal need of the time calls for decisive deeds, heroes arise to become leaders of the present and seers and guides of the future. In them the spirit of a nation wakes to consciousness and frees and gathers up its confined powers. Such a hero we behold in Martin Luther. In him, as never before, the national spirit of the Germans and the religious spirit of Christianity became interpenetrated and united; and therefore Luther was to the Germans an ideal of their own true nature and purpose, and to Christianity a pioneer in a new phase of development. His work was the thoroughly German task of reformation; he was the founder of *Protestantism*. This did not mean merely a cleansing of Catholicism from various false doctrines and usages, but an entirely new stage of development of the Christian religion, a victory over the mediæval dualism of God and the world, of a supernatural, divine state, and a natural, earthly existence, a realization of the Christian principle of the reconciliation of God and the world, of the incarnation of the divine word, and the coming of the kingdom of Heaven among all mankind. Luther was influenced by St. Paul, Augustine, and the German mystics; but he was a Germanized Paul, just as Augustine was a Romanized Paul. For Luther, as for Augustine and Paul, the divine mercy was a well-spring of salvation; it had been personified in Christ and had successfully waged war against sin and tyrannous law, death, and hell. But the German champion of faith did not look upon his belief in the omnipotence of mercy as a binding shackle, as was the attitude of the Roman father of the Church towards ecclesiastical tradition and hierarchy. In the hand of the German his faith became a sword, which de-

stroyed all such bonds, and finally achieved for the conscience, now responsible to God alone, "the liberty of a Christian."

Luther, moreover, could not say as Paul did that the world had been crucified for him in Christ, and that he was blessed only in hope through the anticipation of the second advent of Christ and the establishment of His Heavenly kingdom; but it was by his justifying faith that he was in possession of life and blessedness already while living in this world. He held that the world had been re-created through Christ and redeemed from the powers of evil, and that now, in its purified state, it was to become the seat of divine government. Hence it followed that Luther did not consider a turning away from active life to idle, contemplative enjoyment of God as a manifestation of loving devotion to him, for in his eyes true faith was a "life in God," and a genuine love of God was the source and motive for love of one's neighbor, proving its strength in active contact with the world. From this point of view the life of the world, with all its tasks and burdens, joys and sorrows, appeared in an entirely new light. Marriage now seemed a truly spiritual bond, much more sanctified and pleasing to God than the monastic life; the cells of the monks and nuns were now opened wide, and the lonely parsonage became the home of a pure family life; among its trials and tribulations this spiritual knighthood did not lose in force, but rather gathered strength for its struggle with the evils of life. From these idyllic parsonages of Protestantism how many brave heroes of word and action went forth!

Magisterial government was now reinstated in its dignity as a divine institution equal in importance to the priestly office and independent of it. The state, freed from its connection with the Roman universal theocracy and proud of its individuality, now asserted itself, and resolved to preserve and encourage the right of determining its destiny. Earthly callings and trades, art and science, were delivered from that false conception of the Middle Ages which considered all activity as a selfish submission to passion and as leading away from salvation. Work, now raised to the dignity of an act of devotion, became morally sanctified, by virtue of its relation to the king-

dom of God, as the moral order of the universe, in which each member, by means of the work assigned to him, aids his fellows and contributes to the glory of God. Nature, moreover, did not appear to Luther, as it did to the mediæval Church, in the gloomy light of a hellish product, but rather as the marvellous work of divine wisdom, a reflection as well as an instrument of the divine spirit. The curse which narrow asceticism and slavish fear had laid on all innocent social pleasure, upon all things graceful and beautiful, was removed, since Luther recognized elevated pleasures, music, and joyous sociability as an excellent means of defence against the evil spirits of discontent and doubt.

The Christianity of Luther brought to a close the wide dissension and bitter strife between spirit and nature, and reconciled these elements which had stood in opposition throughout the Middle Ages. Through complete resignation of the spirit to God, man's belief in the divine origin of the soul and its triumph over nature becomes a certainty, and the way is paved for a harmonious reconciliation between spirit and nature.

In his contest with Rome Luther showed himself true to his convictions, both in his character of a brave German hero and as a conscientious Christian. Had it not been for the religious conscientiousness of this man and his unyielding force of character, this titanic struggle against the mediæval Church could never have been brought to a victorious issue. A trait equally Teutonic in its aspect may be recognized in the clear judgment which Luther preserved in all the trials of the contest, and in the conservative piety which made him cling fast to the old Church as long as possible and carry with him as much of it as he consistently could. He did not wish to break with historical Christianity, but desired earnestly to restore it to its pristine purity as testified to in Holy Writ.

In the historical word of God Luther found the Archimedean point from which he could move the world of the Church and put a restraint upon the iconoclastic radicalism of the over-zealous. It was through this restraining deliberation alone that it was possible for the ecclesiastical life of the German nation to be led into a new channel, after its unavoidable

break with the old order, and for Protestantism to gain a firm, permanent, and active hold upon the community, without any fatal crises or obstacles to its progress.

It is true, indeed, that much of the old that remained fitted but poorly into the new order, but this evil and imperfection in the newly-constructed Church was the condition by which alone an active Protestant Church could be called into existence in the German nation. In the establishment of the new Church, as well as in the emancipation from the old, Luther showed his thorough understanding of the temper of his people, and offered them what they needed and as much as they could at that time digest. Luther, it is true, also possessed to an eminent degree that stubbornly firm individualism which may be considered the obverse side of German virtue. Through this perverse obstinacy, which, even in unimportant matters, persists steadily in maintaining its own opinion and refuses to yield to foreign convictions (*e.g.*, those of Zwingli) or even to tolerate them, Luther laid the foundation for the dismemberment of Protestantism into creeds, sects, and parties, and, through this disunion, the foundation for its political impotence and its bitter, dogmatic bickerings. This hereditary defect of Protestantism, for which Luther's personality was in part responsible, showed itself in so aggravated a form in his pupils and followers, who, as usual, inherited more of their master's weaknesses than of his virtues, that the work of reformation of German Christianity, whose beginning had been so promising, was soon entirely warped. Thus it came about that the greatest work of the German nation, the Reformation, bore so bitter fruits. The Germans paid for their religious deliverance from Rome with the loss of political authority and independence, with a permanent dismemberment into creeds and the impossibility of a national union, with the complete ruin of their economical welfare, and with the retrogression of national culture in art and science for two centuries to come. Even the religious life of German Protestantism, however, does not present a pleasing aspect in this period. A dogmatic warfare concerning the "pure doctrine" and a series of interminable polemics



against innumerable heretics, old and new, animated pulpits and universities. While the people were suffering the evils of religious wars and their consequences, the theologians knew no higher interests than the new scholasticism, dogmatic even to the minutest details, yielding nothing to that of the Middle Ages in hair-splitting logic and mania for systematization, and at the same time decidedly inferior to it in width of horizon and elevation of thought. This rigidly orthodox cult of formalism contained in it nothing of that moral quality which cheers the spirits, ennobles life, and guides the people. The horrors connected with the persecution of witches, in which worldly and spiritual chiefs vied with each other, assumed fearful dimensions, and resulted in vulgarizing the feelings, in crushing out humane instincts, in unbridling the most savage, brutish traits, sinking far below the level of heathen culture. The flourishing period of Protestant orthodoxy in the seventeenth century can indeed be regarded only as a religious-ethical disease, whose cause can to some extent be discerned in the unfortunate external circumstances of the period during the Thirty Years' War and after it, but which must be attributed, at least in part, to a degeneration of those qualities of the German people which had proved effective during the Reformation.

A sensitive religious conscience and a deep feeling for religious truth always incline somewhat towards minute investigation of trifles and to doctrinal pedantry, and thus, by the premature crystallization of *ecclesiastical* truths into doctrine, the higher meaning of a search for truth is lost, as was the case at the end of the sixteenth century. Nothing remains for this spirit of investigation but to take up the consideration of petty details and small differences in the expression of dogma. Thus the zeal for truth, in itself a highly estimable quality, becomes a theological fanaticism for doctrinal forms, which, according to circumstances, appears in a tragic light as a heartless mania for persecution, and again takes on a farcical hue in the form of a meaningless delight in details. The history of religion furnishes other examples of this form of disease, but it cannot be denied that the

tendency to it is especially characteristic of the German nature, for it presents the dark side of those worthy qualities which brought forth the Reformation.

The spirit of the Reformation, nevertheless, was not dead among the Germans even in this sad time, but only sunk into a deep sleep, overcome by the evil power of magic, like the Sleeping Beauty in the fairy-tale, or the mythic Brunhilde. The Siegfried who roused the sleeper and freed the prisoner was again, as in Luther's time, the conscientiousness and sincerity of the German character. At the end of the seventeenth century, Philip Spener, an Alsatian by birth, spurred on by his distress over the misery of the time, appeared as a new reformer, and sought to effect "an improvement of the true evangelical Church which should be pleasing to God." When he attempted to replace scholastic learning and barren discussion by active piety of heart and earnest discipline of life, and demanded in place of the interminable prating concerning the justifying power of faith a proof of its saving power in the purification of sentiment and of conduct, it seemed as though the warm, life-giving breath of spring were stirring in the barren regions of the orthodox, doctrinal Church, rousing it to new life after the prolonged torpidity of winter.

Among those studying theology at the various universities, "collegia pietatis" were now formed, in which they laid aside the meaningless scholastic dogmas of the lecture-room to become absorbed in the Holy Scriptures. They learned again from the Bible the real meaning of Christian piety and morality, and the proper constitution of a Christian congregation according to the pattern of the oldest apostolic communities. These circles of Bible friends stood up in active opposition to the wild, dissolute life then common in the universities, or at least withdrew from it and presented models of earnest Christian morality and self-control. It must be admitted that in doing so they fell into an ascetic rigor of life possessing some analogies with Catholic asceticism in its timid fear of the corrupting influences of worldly life. It would, however, be a serious error to look upon Pietism as simply a re-

lapse from the Protestant to the Catholic monastic morality. At the foundation of monastic asceticism lay the condemnation of every natural sentiment as such ; hence it always culminated in the condemnation of the love of the sexes, which must be regarded as the focus of the sensuous life. The measure of every ascetic tendency can hence be determined by its relation to this point. Pietism, it is true, opposed the libertinism of the seventeenth century, especially as manifested in the relation of the sexes, with earnest Christian restraint and morality, but it never regarded love and marriage as unholy or corrupting. This rigor, it is true, was exaggerated and used against innocent pleasures, for the Pietists preferred being too strict to falling into the laxity of the other party. This strictness, therefore, was not the product of unevangelical principles, but was rather brought about by the circumstances which put the Pietists into opposition to the surrounding community. Those imbued with a sincere and active Christian spirit could maintain no other position, over against the practical heathenism common among the so-called Christians, just as no other position was tenable by the early Christian communities in relation to the thoroughly corrupt heathen world.

A counterpart to the Pietism of Spener was furnished by the community of Moravians founded by Count Zinzendorf, in which the traditions of the Moravian brethren were united with the newly-awakened evangelical spirit of Pietism to form an "ecclesiola in ecclesia." According to this form of belief, Christianity was relieved of all unessential doctrines, and was thrown back upon the basis of sincere love for the Saviour and for the brethren ; even in the arrangement and customs of the community the apostolic time was faithfully imitated. Among the Moravians, just as among the Pietists, the theoretical side of religion was disregarded in favor of practical piety ; but while the Spenerians placed all weight on the will, upon strength of conscience and sanctity of life, the Moravians assigned all importance to the affectionate heart, to the bliss-giving emotion produced by the love of the Saviour and the grateful affection felt in return for him and for the brethren. It may perhaps be said that the Moravians represent Christianity

in its feminine development. This explains the fact of their finding sympathy and followers to such an extent among women. It was naturally impossible for such a development to become national, confining religion entirely as it did to the subjective side of pious emotions, and founding the existence of the community upon natural sympathy and the attractions presented by subjective emotion alone. But as an element in increasing religious devotion and in refining the spiritual life, Moravianism had a great influence for good, as well as for evil. It certainly furthered considerably an effeminate sensitiveness and emotionalism, a morbid self-analysis and self-complacency, —the chief cult of that peculiar growth of the eighteenth century, the “beautiful souls” (*die schönen Seelen*). On the other hand, however, it was also favorable to a refinement of feeling, a development of heart-culture, an appreciation of the life of the individual, as well as a habit of introspection of the secret processes of soul-life, from which sprang the finest flowers of German poetry and philosophy at the end of the eighteenth century.

Goethe's relations to the Moravian communities, which he commemorated in his “Confessions of a Beautiful Soul” (“*Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele*”), are well known; it is likewise an established fact that Kant, Novalis, and Schleiermacher went forth from Pietistic and Moravian circles. If the deep reverence felt by the early Germans for the “holy and mysterious” in woman be recalled, the conclusion will be justified that the effeminate piety of the Moravians and Pietists belongs to that class of phenomena in which the German national character shows itself in a peculiarly characteristic, though imperfect, light.

The supplement, as well as the counterpart, to this phenomenon, was *Rationalism*, which arose in Germany in the middle of the eighteenth century. Despite its opposition to ecclesiastical orthodoxy, it is a manifestation of that same German spirit of Protestantism which produced the Reformation. Just as the conscientious earnestness of the Reformation came to life again in Pietism, so in this awakening of the eighteenth century there comes to the front once more the

earnest striving of the thoughtful mind after truth, the assertion of the right of individual investigation and examination, which had proved so effective in the early part of the Reformation, although soon crushed. Just as, in the case of the individual, moral sense and rational thought cannot be separated from one another, and as their union alone furnishes a sound basis for religious feeling, so all three elements are necessary to the existence of German Protestantism. Therefore it was in keeping with the natural order of events that in the historical development of Christianity, side by side with the practical Pietistic religion of conscience and of emotion, there arose the religion of reason, of the age of enlightenment,—the bias of the one supplementing that of the other.

One of the principles of the philosophy of Wolff demanded that one should have reasonable opinions about everything; explain everything on sufficient grounds and demonstrate it methodically; and allow the truth of revelation itself only so far as the possibility and necessity for it could be proved to be within the limits of reason. All this aroused the critical sense, even in the domain of religion, as well as the development of that fearlessness in probing and examining, which, it is true, is accompanied by doubt, even when it does not come into collision with the doctrine of the Church. The traditional dogma was not attacked by the popular form of enlightenment, but was simply ignored as an indifferent matter in no wise contributing to happiness. According to the optimistic Leibnitz-Wolffian philosophy, happiness was considered the highest aim of man and the standard of all his judgments, and one did not consider it necessary to inquire minutely concerning the full meaning of this conception nor to go into details about the right and extent of its application to religion and ethics. Christianity, in coming into contact with the religion of reason, grew shallow and lowered itself to the level of a doctrine of expediency, and a sentimental admiration of the fortunate arrangement of nature and the natural excellence of man. It became, in short, a "natural religion" of unrestrained optimism, widely separated from the Christian-

ity of the Bible and the Reformation, as well as from that of the Middle Ages. The unhistorical sense of German enlightenment in the eighteenth century overlooked this contradiction with a kind of childlike guilelessness. In this particular the Germans of the eighteenth century present a strong contrast to the contemporaneous French "naturalists," who were violently bitter and radical in their destructive tendencies. This radicalism is entirely in keeping with the cold, mathematical judgment of the French; in like manner the peaceful optimism of German enlightenment betrays itself in the inborn necessity of the German spirit to treat gently the sanctuaries of the fathers, even when it has outgrown them, and to bind the new to the old as closely as possible. This conservative tendency of the German national character, together with the courage of unrestrained criticism, secures the constant development of the community and prevents inclinations towards individual peculiarity from becoming fixed and isolated; for these tendencies find a contrast as well as a corrective in the progress of universal development, and become merged in it.

German enlightenment finds its completion, and at the same time its dissolution, in Lessing and Kant. With an acuteness unknown before his time, Lessing brought criticism to bear upon the Bible itself, and proved unhesitatingly, in the face of all logical defence, the untenability of the traditional theory concerning the verbal inspiration of the Bible. He was not moved to this vigorous and relentless criticism because he aimed at the destruction of Christianity; he was actuated, on the contrary, by a firm conviction of its indestructibility, and of the independence of the eternal truths revealed in it of any of the accidents of historical events with which tradition connected them.

The object of Kant's critical philosophy was to deduce these eternal truths (which, according to Lessing, form the essence of the Christian religion) from the nature of reason in man and to found them upon it. After a critical analysis of man's perceptive powers, he became convinced of the human impossibility of attaining an objective knowledge of the transcendental world, and then found in conscience, in the sense of

duty, the fixed point in which the supersensuous, moral system of the world reveals itself to us in the undeniable claims of moral law. The certainty of this truth does not rest upon outward perception, but upon the inner voice of conscience; the supreme good of our will lies not in outward uses, but in its inner union with the law of the good,—in good will itself. Kant did not hold the will to be naturally good, as did the followers of enlightenment, for he considered it as standing in opposition to moral law and setting up selfish inclination against duty. This radical perverseness can be overcome by a complete change of principle alone, a new birth of inclination. This re-creation can be brought about by a voluntary act, which admits of no further explanation, and which makes the comprehension of the idea of the good the highest purpose of the will. According to Kant, it is possible for us to accomplish this because we ought to do so. From this obligation, which includes in itself a practically endless task, for the complete accomplishment of which our earthly existence is not long enough and human power is not adequate, Kant argues a moral and rational belief in God and immortality. Finally, he succeeds in bringing this “religion within the bounds of pure reason” into a certain connection with the Christian doctrine of salvation. In it he finds a symbolic illustration of the ethical ideas and events which are comprised within the experience of every reasonable being. According to Kant, Christ is the visible example or ideal of mankind beloved by God; to believe in him signifies taking this ideal into one’s own volition. In the doctrine of the atonement and reparation through Christ is expressed symbolically that the new man in us, the good will, suffers for the sin of the old, wicked being, and at the same time makes good the sin. Kant declared the moral and allegorical change in the significance of the ecclesiastical doctrines to be the proper means of making, out of that mixture of truth and superstition, a religion of pure reason, which should become the authorized belief of the Church. With this change he hoped to prepare for a universal ethical community, superior to all churches,—the true kingdom of God.

The teachings of the philosopher of Königsberg made a deep impression upon the moral and religious convictions of the German people, and still have a wide influence, and we are therefore justified in seeking in his philosophy a typical expression of certain phases of German national character. Two prominent features call for our consideration: one is a strong moral earnestness, the pathos of the sense of duty, the enthusiasm for the sublime majesty of moral law as the one true ruling power over the world. In the presence of this ideal all ignoble maxims of expediency vanish, as well as all flattering illusions concerning the goodness and the purity of human nature. The sacred precept bends the pride and the self-love of man in letting him see clearly the vast distance between him and his ideal; at the same time, however, it raises the lowly to a consciousness of his high dignity in making him a citizen of the transcendental world, and calls upon him to enter into a bold fight in the cause of reason, liberty, and truth, against the powers of sensuousness, of slavery, and of delusion.

Bold, vigorous fighting, according to the early Germans, was the purpose and occupation of the life of gods and men; and they received Christianity as the struggle of Christ against Satan and the evil powers attending him. It will be recalled that for Luther, also, Christ's work of salvation consisted in his vigorous combat with Satan, death, and hell; and the continuous task of the Christian is to fight against the attacks of Satan. In the same way Kant considered the purpose and substance of the life of the individual, as of mankind in general, to be the struggle of the good against the bad principle, of reason against sensuousness, of duty against inclination, of the moral religion of reason against the worship of crystallized superstition. In so far, then, Kant's view of life is good Christian doctrine, as well as genuinely German in sentiment. From another point of view, however, it diverges widely from the Christian idea of salvation, and represents in clear outlines that feature of German nature which is the dark side of the strong feeling of personality,—namely, unsocial and unhistorical individualism.

Kant believed that moral freedom of individuality could be



secured only by making the individual rely upon himself alone, independent of every modifying influence of external powers, delivered from the trammels of nature, of society, of history, and of divinity. According to the Christian doctrine of salvation, neither the harm nor the welfare of the individual finds its first cause in himself; the former seeks its origin in the common nature of the species, while the latter looks for its cause in the education of the human race by divine powers of good, which throughout history wage a victorious war with the bad, and change the natural race of men to a new community, pleasing in the sight of God. Kant, on the other hand, holds that every individual is responsible for the evil in his nature through some unaccountable but voluntary act, and that his regeneration also can be accomplished by his free will alone. No one is to share any responsibility for the moral conditions of others, and likewise he does not owe his own state, whether good or bad, to foreign influence. In this sphere of isolated moral atoms there is no transfer of the operation of moral powers from one individual to another, and no continuance of the effect of a moral action from one day to another. This is a manifestation of that very individualism, systematized and raised to a principle, which has always formed part of the inheritance of the German character, and which it seems difficult for the educating power of Christianity itself to subdue.

From this point of view, consequently, Kant's religion of an ethical belief of reason, while it is but too thoroughly German, is so much the less Christian in spirit. It has always been the case, however, that biassed and morbid tendencies bring destruction upon themselves, because when carried out to their logical consequences they are sure to be reduced *ad absurdum*. At the end of the eighteenth century the truth of this was proven by the fate of the self-sufficient, self-exalting subjectivity of the time, which was shattered to atoms by coming into collision with the facts of experience as well as with the result of more earnest thought. When the combined powers of romantic socialism, held together by the master-hand of Napoleon, fell upon Germany, destroyed the political exist-

ence of the Germans, fettered their much-vaunted liberty, and threatened even to denationalize—*i.e.*, annihilate—their culture, then the Germans understood fully what must inevitably be the fate of a nation in whose midst centrifugal and anti-social tendencies are at work throughout centuries, in thought and action, in ethics and politics, in religion and philosophy.

The people suddenly remembered the existence of a German *nation* with a glorious history behind it, whose past had been made bright by the development of a peculiarly German morality, art, and religion. The more pitifully the melancholy aspect of the German nation stood out in contrast to the glorious past, the more deeply did learning and poetry become absorbed in the treasures of the better past, and thus learned to love and respect once more what the arrogance of the religion of enlightenment had thrown aside as antiquated rubbish. At the same time philosophy, in its progress, came to recognize how absurdly limited the judgment and how unnatural the abstraction that sought to make the individual *ego* entirely self-sufficient, and to evolve the world of reality, in all its abundance, out of the idle reason of the individual. The *ego* cannot for a moment be conceived of without the non-ego, the subject without the object, the spirit without the nature, the individual without the community. It likewise became clear that there could be no morality and sanctity of individuals, the origin, abode, and support of which lay not in the historical morality and religion of the national and ecclesiastical community. In this manner there was effected the change from pure ethics and religion, the product of individual reason, to the recognition of that objective morality which is a fixed part of the system of a national state, and of that objective religion which owes its origin and nurture to the Christian Church, the historical community holding to the gospel preached by Christ.

This departure from unhistorical individualism to the historical community, in which the difference between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries may be noted particularly, was not an unalloyed good. Some took the exaggerated stand that the reason and conscience of the individual meant nothing in the

presence of the objective system and tradition of Church and State. Although a dangerous tendency, this was a natural one, a reaction against the other extreme of enlightenment. However, the great minds which at the beginning of this century directed the outer and inner life of the German nation into new paths were not led astray by this delusion, but with clear intelligence set about the task of reconciling the right of individuality with the claims of historical community.

In the field of religion, Schleiermacher, above all others, took up the work, and in a masterly manner showed its proper solution. In him were united the delicate religious feeling of Moravian Pietism and the manly clear-headedness of enlightenment and of the critical philosophy. From his youthful impressions of Moravianism he knew that religion is something more than a mere postulate of morality, a habit of looking upon our duties as a divine command. He recognized that it is a feeling of the connection existing between individual existence and the system of the world, a feeling which cannot thrive in an isolated individual, but craves a community of believers, out of whose common consciousness the pious self-consciousness of the individual grows and proves its existence. At the same time it was an absolute necessity for his keen, philosophically trained reason to dissect thoughtfully all experiences, whether of an internal or external nature, and to place them in the clear light of self-consciousness. In consequence thereof he became the reformer of the Protestant theology, and founder of a mode of religious thought in which large numbers of the Germans found, and still find, satisfaction, containing, as it does, the kernel of Christianity stripped of the dry husks of old dogma and brought into harmony with modern thought.

Sin and redemption are the poles of this form of belief, also; salvation, however, is not considered a supernatural act, as in the miraculous story of the past, but the deliverance of the pious consciousness from the shackles of sense, or the victory of the spirit over the flesh,—a process continually repeating itself in the pious experience of the community.

Dogma, from this point of view, also receives an ethical-

allegorical meaning similar to the teaching of Kant concerning the victory of the good over the bad principle. Kant, however, considered this merely an event in the inner life of the individual,—an entirely voluntary act; whilst Schleiermacher looked upon it as the common experience of the Christian community—due not to the self-sufficient liberty of isolated individuals, but to that historical knowledge of God proceeding from Jesus in whom it was revealed in striking originality—which may be looked upon as the being of God in Christ, and, through him, in the “common spirit” of the Christian community.

The pious consciousness of the individual can thus be closely connected with the ecclesiastical community and with Christ, its historical head, without entailing the obligation of looking upon Christ as an absolute miracle, or of regarding the wonders of the gospels handed down by him as facts of history. The belief in Christ is, accordingly, nothing more than faith in the divine truth and world-subduing power of the knowledge of God revealed by Jesus,—a faith resting on the common experience of the Christian community. He is the “Redeemer,” inasmuch as he is the creative prototype of the religion of salvation, which, it is true, is brought to us through the mediation of the Christian Church, but whose truth, as far as we are concerned, does not rest upon the outward authority of Church or Bible, but upon the inner experience proved anew in the daily life of every pious Christian. Here is a conception of the Christian religion which cancels the limited judgment of former points of view and strives to meet those necessities which are deeply rooted in the German nature, if not in human nature generally. Individuality and society are to have equal rights, and similarly the reasoning mind and the feeling heart attain full recognition.

Throughout all phases of history, religious as well as secular, the assertion of personality was a prominent feature of German existence, and forms pre-eminently the essence of the Reformation of the sixteenth century,—that great act in the drama of the world’s history.

At the same time, however, during the progress of the re-

form movement the obverse side of this virtue presents itself to view,—namely, a one-sided individualism, an aversion to any subordination of individuals to a common whole. To this defect can be traced the political weakness of the Germans, as compared with the socialism of the Romance nations, and the ecclesiastical weakness of the German Protestants, split up as they were into sects and creeds, in contrast to the close unity of the Roman theocracy. The dangers of this bent towards individualism were counteracted by another trait peculiar to German character,—namely, a conservative feeling of reverence for existing and inherited conditions, which held the Germans back from radical destruction even when they had freed themselves from intolerable bonds, and also made them seek to combine new and old together when making a new departure. German history, indeed, shows more than one epoch of reform and emancipation, but no *revolution*; it does not move forward by sudden leaps, by violent action and reaction, but in a course of development, on the whole, comparatively constant. To the accomplishment of this end, however, still another trait of German character contributed its influence. The German is of a meditative nature, disposed to ponder over affairs, to arrange his ideas in a logical sequence, and to regulate his acts according to consistent principles. His reflection is not so much that of abstract formal reason as of the *whole man*; his feelings, his moral qualities, his æsthetic intuitions, take part in it by putting questions to him, directing him in his course, and setting bounds to his conclusions. His thought in regard to religious matters finds it especially hard to free itself from the influence of the necessities of the spirit and the moral judgments of conscience. For this reason the philosophers, in their criticism of religion, proceed much more deliberately and moderately than the free-thinkers of Romance nations; for the latter are guided in their research by abstract, formal reason, which denies religious conceptions and institutions all the more readily because it does not take the trouble to consider the matter from all points of view and according to deep-lying motives. The voice of conscience and the divination of his feelings force the German to the

conviction that some precious truth lies concealed in that which was sacred to his fathers, even though his reason may not recognize it. It is his duty to seek this truth beneath the antiquated wrappings; not till he has found it does he dare to cast aside the traditional forms; he maintains his position of negation unhesitatingly only after he has found a positive substitute for that which he has abandoned; having made sure of the spirit, he can easily dispense with the letter.

To the truth of this all our great thinkers and critics are witnesses,—Lessing and Herder, Kant and Fichte, Schleiermacher and Hegel. But this virtue has a weak obverse. Where religion and imagination are so powerful that it is impossible for logical reason to assert itself, religion becomes degraded to a mere blind faith, priding itself, perchance, upon its want of thought, its "*credo quia absurdum*," or else it seeks to create a belief for itself by means of a poetic imagination, and frequently attains a fantastic mysticism in which deep meditation approaches dangerously near the abyss of insanity. Examples of this are not wanting in German religious history, but, since they are exceptions, they cannot be considered as typical of German nature. Among the Germans of different sects and creeds a compromise is struck between the necessity of the reason, which cannot be entirely ignored, to have an opinion even in matters of religion, and the impulse not to be disturbed in the possession of traditional conceptions and habits of thought. Thought is given jurisdiction over certain domains, and in return submits unquestioningly in other matters, and also manifests an unconditional willingness to defend the positions of traditional belief. It thus happens, by means of a sophistically demoralized understanding, that the most incredible view is looked upon as worthy of belief, and a tradition beyond the conception of the imagination as a reasonable truth. This attitude is common to all theology, but it is probably more frequent in that of Germany, where scholasticism took on a new lease of life after having run its course everywhere else, and where, moreover, it has not died out even yet, despite the Lessings, Kants, and Schleiermachers. It certainly cannot be denied that a tendency to

obscurity and confusion, to subtlety and artificiality, to pedantry and formalism, as well as to a barbarous and involved style, is frequently characteristic of the reverse side of the German virtue of thoroughness and earnestness.

In the foregoing pages the attempt has been made to point out those qualities of German national character which may be recognized in the historical development of the religion of the Germans. The question suggests itself, What can be predicted of the future of the religious development of the Germans, in view of the historical individuality of the religious character of the nation? To answer such a question concerning the future is always a difficult task, and is doubly so in the case of the German people. Here the highly-organized religious belief, as well as the mode of life in Church and Theology, stands in so close relation to political affairs that all changes and alterations of the spirit or form of politics exert an influence upon the religious life of the ecclesiastical community. One point, however, must be taken into consideration. Teutonism and Christianity, it has been seen, stood in the beginning in the relation of pupil and teacher, and only in a few particulars did the pupil oppose the passive resistance of his individuality to the control of the training through which he was passing. Already towards the end of the Middle Ages, however, the German peculiarity, as shown in mysticism, had a positive influence on the conception and form of Christianity, and finally in the Reformation the German spirit developed its strength to such a degree that it succeeded in producing a new phase of Christianity, in the form of Protestantism. The relation, at first so one-sided, thus became reciprocal, and to such an extent that it is difficult to decide which of the two parties, Christianity or Teutonism, is more indebted to the other.

The peculiar phase of Protestant Christianity, in which the influence of the German spirit is seen in contradistinction to the Roman, Greek, and Semitic, has developed along a line growing more and more distinct throughout the three centuries of Protestant history, gradually freeing itself from the alloy

of mediæval Catholic Christianity with which it was at first mixed in so large proportions. The obvious inference is that the German element in Protestantism will triumph completely over every foreign admixture, whether Romanism, Hellenism, or Semitism.

The purely human and universal essence of Christianity, the ideal religion of humanity, the religion of Jesus (according to Paul "the divine man," according to John "divine logos"), will be bound up with German nature much more closely when it is freed from the Oriental forms derived from successive national incarnations in Semitism, Hellenism, and Romanism. The ideal, ethically religious spirit of Christianity will receive glorious embodiment through reciprocal penetration with the noble German nature, which will attain thereby its most sublime moral spiritualization.

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## PHILANTHROPY AND MORALITY.\*

THERE is a widely-diffused notion nowadays that in our relations with our fellow-men we have simply to wish them well and to do them good, and that this is a perfectly simple and easy matter. The popular demand is for "practical" beneficence as opposed to a charity based upon "theory." It is assumed that what sets men at odds is the fruitless and age-long controversy about "ultimate truths and abstract propositions;" that if men would only devote themselves to doing good they would all fall into line and the sufferings of the world would be removed. The "service of humanity" is set forward as a substitute for adherence to creeds and dogmas and formularies of devotion, or the development of ethical systems. "Conduct is three-fourths of life," it is said, "and conduct has to do with people about us. The out-

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